

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR DIGITAL INCLUSION

Digital inclusion in mediation refers to the strategic use of digital technologies to enable and expand meaningful participation of diverse stakeholders in peace processes.

It requires not just access to technology, but the capacity to engage substantively and at all stages in shaping peace outcomes. By expanding who can contribute – from conflict-affected communities to diaspora groups, from women in restrictive contexts to youth movements – digital inclusion helps build more legitimate, sustainable, and just peace.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND FUNCTIONS OF DIGITAL INCLUSION



DATA ANALYSIS

Collect: Enable participatory data collection through encrypted submissions and multi-language interfaces

Analyze: Process inputs at scale using AI to identify consensus and divergences

Visualize: Transform complex data into intuitive formats for collective understanding



DIALOGUE & NETWORKING

Connect: Facilitate structured online dialogues across conflict divides, enabling simultaneous participation from hundreds of stakeholders

Coordinate: Establish encrypted workspaces for safe collaboration where peace actors can share sensitive information without surveillance

Sustain: Create digital infrastructure for long-term engagement



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Amplify: Scale peace narratives through digital campaigns reaching beyond traditional media to engage key influencers and bridge-builders

Counter: Deploy rapid response to dis/misinformation using fact-checking networks and trusted local voices

Engage: Create feedback loops with wider populations

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES OF USE CASES

AI-POWERED MASS CONSULTATIONS WITH AI DIALOGUE PLATFORM



United Nations DPPA has adapted Remesh's AI dialogue platform in more than 20 contexts, including Afghanistan, Guatemala, Libya, and Yemen. This technology enables senior UN officials to conduct real-time consultations with up to 1,000 participants in their native languages and dialects, helping to identify areas of consensus on sensitive issues such as ceasefires, humanitarian measures and peace priorities. The platform's anonymity feature allows participants to engage candidly and securely. This is a critical consideration, especially for women participants, who often face heightened risks when engaging in political and peace processes.

PARTICIPATORY FORESIGHT THROUGH DIGITAL SENSEMAKING SOFTWARE



CMI deployed Inklus, a mobile-based platform for participatory analysis, in Armenia, enabling dozens of stakeholders to submit ideas via smartphones, vote on conflict drivers, and visualize consensus through real-time data analytics. The digital tool enhances participation by allowing simultaneous input from all attendees regardless of hierarchy or speaking confidence, while interactive visualizations instantly reveal areas of convergence across political divides.

LARGE SCALE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH AI CHATBOT



CMI deployed WhatsApp chatbots with AI sensemaking capabilities to engage youth representatives from Yemeni political parties and movements across the country. During consultations, participants responded to questions via text or voice messages in local dialects, with the AI system transcribing, translating, and analyzing responses to identify consensus areas, contested claims, and priority themes for Yemen's political vision-building process.

RISKS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Connectivity Barriers

Weak infrastructure and high data costs exclude rural and displaced communities. **Mitigation:** Deploy hybrid approaches; negotiate zero-rated access; establish community hubs, partner with local CSOs to provide data/internet support.

Digital Literacy Divides

Tech-savvy urban populations tend to dominate while rural communities are sidelined, resulting in biased representation in peace outcomes. **Mitigation:** Co-design interfaces with communities; provide hands-on training in local languages; use trusted facilitators who understand both technology and context; consider voice based applications.

Gendered Exclusion

Women and girls may contend with limited device access, online harassment and time constraints due to care responsibilities. **Mitigation:** Design flexible participation; create women-only spaces; provide data stipends; consider consultative platforms that protect privacy including anonymizing personal data.

Security & Surveillance Risks

Monitoring by conflict parties leads to retaliation against activists, who are increasingly subjected to online violence. Women and minorities face heightened risks of technology-facilitated harassment. **Mitigation:** Use end-to-end encryption and anonymous platforms that do not track IP addresses; establish rapid response plans for online threats; never store non-essential participant data.

Trust Erosion

Anonymous participation, without proper and transparent outreach, enables spoilers; distance undermines relationship-building. Disinformation spreads rapidly through digital channels, undermining peace narratives. **Mitigation:** Build trust through initial face-to-face meetings if possible; use verification systems; identify and counter false narratives.

False Expectations

Digital consultation may create unrealistic hopes; participants reject outcomes they were not present to shape. Remote participants cannot witness the complex trade-offs and compromises inherent in negotiations. **Mitigation:** Set clear and realistic expectations; show how inputs influenced outcomes.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR PROCESS DESIGN



Purpose: Clearly articulate how the introduction of digital technologies is intended to increase the quality and inclusion of the mediation process, including the timing and modality of its introduction to the process.

Complementarity: Technology enhances reach and scale but cannot replace the trust-building and nuanced communication offered by in-person dialogue. Adopt a hybrid mediation strategy that strategically blends online and offline methods.

Context-First Design: Conduct thorough digital ecosystem analysis before selecting specific tools – understand local infrastructure, existing tools, cultural norms, context and community preferences.

Do No Harm: Prioritize participant safety over participation rates; revert to or prioritize traditional methods if digital tools increase risks to participants/communities.

Local Ownership: Partner with community organizations; avoid imposing external tech solutions that communities cannot use or maintain.

Continuous Adaptation: Monitor impacts in real-time; pivot approaches based on community feedback and changing dynamics.